

March 13, 1959

cc
The President
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

With your note of 5 March 1959, you sent me some TOP SECRET memoranda from Prime Minister Macmillan, outlining certain statements which Khrushchev had made to him, relating to atomic weapons and ballistic missiles.

These memoranda were considered in Executive Session of the United States Intelligence Board, and we have reached unanimous conclusions. I quote below a summary of these conclusions, and attach the full text of the agreed paper giving more detailed comments.

a. A careful scrutiny of Khrushchev's remarks leads us to believe he was utilizing half-truths concerning Soviet nuclear capabilities in support of his political objectives. We note that the line taken by Khrushchev is consistent with previous Soviet statements deprecating the possibility of limited warfare using small tactical nuclear weapons. Khrushchev was probably trying to maintain pressure on the West to further the Soviet line at Geneva, i.e., that an elaborate control system to detect small yield tests is unnecessary; to talk down the concept of limited war, particularly with small nuclear weapons, and to engender concern over the "nth" country problem.

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b. Khrushchev's statement that the Soviet Union is more interested in megaton weapons than in kiloton or smaller types and that it did not believe in the concept of local wars with tactical nuclear weapons is only partially in agreement with our estimates. The Soviets have demonstrated a strong interest in megaton weapons for strategic purposes, but a wealth of intelligence also supports their considerable interest in the development and use of small yield weapons for tactical, naval and air defense purposes.


c. Khrushchev's statement that the Soviets had more than enough atomic weapons and that they were reducing their investment in the production of fissionable material is contrary to present estimates. Considerable evidence supports the continued expansion of the Soviet fissionable material production for military purposes. While we believe the Soviets have enough nuclear weapons to launch a sizeable strategic attack against the United States, its Allies and its overseas bases, we do not believe that their present stockpile is sufficient to satisfy all their requirements for tactical weapons and particularly for air defense.

d. Khrushchev's statement that they presently had a capability to fire intermediate range ballistic missiles from mobile platforms at targets in Europe, North Africa and Asia and that they were pretty near the point of being able to fire ICBMs also from mobile platforms is essentially in agreement with the U.S. estimate on Soviet missile capabilities. We consider that the ICBM can be rail mobile, but will require certain minimum fixed facilities at each launching site.

e. Khrushchev's indicated desire to keep nuclear weapons, or information for making them, from spreading to additional countries including the Chinese is in accord with our present estimates.

I should be glad to discuss with you any of the points in the above memorandum or attachment if you feel any supplementary information is required.

Respectfully yours,



Allen W. Dulles
Director

DCI
Encl. (All/copies filed in office of DD/I)

AWD:at

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